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FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Bud Hicks and John Upton

Finding:

The Angora Fire has provided the USFS, States of Nevada and California, and the TRPA and other environmental authorities, with an opportunity to implement forest restoration techniques that can be a model for the rest of the nation. Efforts should be immediately undertaken to restore the forests burned in the Angora Fire.

Background and Supporting Evidence:

The Commission has been advised by a licensed forester having exceptional experience and qualifications in forest health and restoration that unless immediate steps are taken the forested areas within the Angora Fire burn zone will lose commercial value, will exude excessive amounts of greenhouse gases as the remaining trees die and decay, and will result in the conversion of the burned area to one of dead trees and growths of scrub for many, many years. However, he also estimates that 98% of the greenhouse gases released by the fire could be recovered over time by salvaging fire killed timber and restoring the forest. In addition to these benefits, by providing for appropriate harvesting of the remaining fire-damaged and dead trees and undertaking restoration efforts, a healthy, vibrant forest will return to the area, along with its attendant benefits to the community and the Lake.

There is a need to move quickly, as the commercial value of the remaining burnt trees diminishes quickly as bark beetles and other infestations attack the weakened trees. The present commercial value of the lumber that can be salvaged, if such efforts are permitted to be undertaken right away, should pay for the costs of such removal and a significant portion of the costs of restoration of the burned area.

It is not the intent of the proponents of this F&R, nor should it be the intent of the Commission if this F&R is adopted, that any recommended action herein supplant or result in the modification of the USFS South Shore Fuel Reduction Project that is currently under way.

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Recommendation(s)

Recommendation 1: The Governors of the States of Nevada and California should request the United States Forest Service and all other landowners within the Angora Fire burn area to immediately undertake a project to facilitate the removal of burnt trees from the area that are salvageable for commercial purposes including, as necessary, allowing commercial logging concerns reasonable access to the area to undertake such removal.

Recommendation 2: The Governor of the State of California should request or direct, as appropriate, the TRPA and the California State Water Quality Control Board/Lahontan Region, and other State agencies under his administration that have jurisdiction in the Angora Fire area, to expedite the permitting process to allow such tree removals including, if necessary, the waiver of any regulatory requirements that may impede such timber removal.

Recommendation 3: The Governors of the States of California and Nevada should request the TRPA and the United States Forest Service to adopt and implement a forest restoration plan for the Angora burn zone that will serve as a model for the rest of the nation and that will restore this important part of the Tahoe Basin in a manner that will benefit the Lake over the long term.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that first priority for clearance of burnt trees and forest restoration efforts in the Angora burn area (in both terms of timing and funding) be given to areas within the wildland urban interface area, the area within ¼ mile of any dwellings within the burned area.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that the above recommendations be adopted by the States of California and Nevada and the United States Forest Service, as the standard procedure to be followed in any future areas of the Lake Tahoe Basin that are subject to catastrophic fire.

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

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- ☐ Cost / It is believed that the costs of facilitating removal of the salvageable materials from the Angora fire zone will be minimal, and that the costs of reforestation of the area can be offset by the sums that commercial logging concerns would be willing to pay for such rights. Further, it is believed there would be great support for restoration of this area by conservation groups and residents of the Tahoe Basin.
- ☐ Funding source / See above
- ☐ Staffing / No impact
- ☐ Existing regulations and/or laws / Existing laws and regulations would not have to be changed to allow removal of the burned materials and restoration of the area.

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency